



What's the real cost of the Iraq war?

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On March 20, 2003, the U.S. launched a war in Iraq. It has cost us dearly, not only in human lives and money, but also in our "international standing." The latter is not very well understood in America. So it's time for me to chip in my two cents ...

1. From a story on 60 Minutes

About six months ago, CBS's 60 Minutes aired an interview with a former CIA agent, who accompanied Saddam Hussein in his lonely days. Saddam confided in him that he never believed that the U.S. would have launched a war like that until it really happened. Upon hearing that, I knew Saddam was telling the truth and here is why: The U.S. system, viewed externally, was so perfect that it would just be impossible to see a questionable war like that launched. Saddam did not believe it, nor did anybody in China. That perfect image of the U.S. system was completely shattered on that day of March 20, 2003! In other words, the beacon went off.

2. Did the beacon really go off?

Yes! The U.S. would never be the same again. Now, which country benefited most from the Iraq war? Regionally, Iran, obviously! Globally, China! Not obvious? Here is why:

- (1) The U.S. defense industry is so well entrenched that it has to have enemies to survive. After the Cold War, the obvious pick was China, with all kinds of accusations from communism to human rights. However, most of these accusations went away with the Iraq war. China rapidly moved forward (without much distraction from the U.S.) and has doubled its GDP since then.
- (2) It was a wake-up call for China: the U.S. system (capitalism + democracy) is not as good as it looked and the Chinese system (capitalism + autocracy) is not as bad as it was accused of. As a result, the push toward a U.S.-like democracy inside China before 2003 was largely gone!

What about the other emerging economies?

- (1) Russia: It adopted the U.S.-like democracy in a hurry after the Cold War, only to have everything ruined, especially the economy. Over the past few years, Russia has been closely watching and modeling after the Chinese system, with its ties to China being closer than ever.
- (2) Brazil: It has also looked at the Chinese system as a possible model, strengthening the already-tight bilateral relationship between the two countries even more.
- (3) India: Talk to any educated Indians today, most have huge admiration for the modern China.

3. Are we winning in Iraq?

No, we are not - There are no winners in this kind of war! A more valid question is this: who could afford to lose more? It turned out that this is a war we could hardly afford to begin with. Besides, the Iraq war distracted us from our legitimate target: Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Now, regardless of the outcome of the war in Afghanistan, the cost will prove to be very high. Meanwhile, China is on par to double its GDP again in the next 7 to 8 years, well on its way to surpass us as the largest economy on earth by 2030.



4. Can the beacon be back on again?

Yes, possibly, with the changes as I suggested (www.west-east-international.com/doc/USAstruct2.pdf). But our time is running short (www.lorencollins.net/tytler.html).

As a young man growing up in China in the 1970s, I thought of nothing but “getting the hell out of here.” Following the beacon, I left China in 1982 and became a U.S. citizen in 1997. However, China has fundamentally changed so much over the past two decades that I recently concluded that overall the Chinese system is better than ours. Today, I devote myself to the positive development of the U.S.-China relationship. I focus on the U.S. side mostly, because that’s where the danger is: a soon-to-be 2nd-class economy with a 1st-class military! In that sense alone, no Chinese-Americans want to see a declining America, let alone so quickly and in a direction abandoned by China (www.creators.com/conservative/thomas-sowell/the-limits-of-power.html).

5. Concluding remarks

We, as a country, are in deep trouble (www.infowars.com/steve-wynn-takes-on-washington/). The rise of China as a competitor is inevitable, but the Iraq war has helped China catch up with us faster, both economically and politically. Unless we change quickly, I believe March 20, 2003 will eventually be marked as the beginning of the end of democracy as we know it. That is, my fellow Americans, the real cost of the Iraq war.